

**High-Impact Tutoring:
An Evidence-Based
Strategy to Accelerate
Learning**



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Introduction

The highest priority of the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) remains to ensure that the state's 1.4 million students thrive despite the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The NJDOE is committed to providing high quality guidance and support to Local Education Agencies (LEAs), including efforts to accelerate student learning.

In introducing this guide, the NJDOE aims to highlight tutoring as an effective means to increase student learning outcomes. LEAs have a unique opportunity to implement High-Impact Tutoring (HIT), an equitable, well-researched and evidence-based intervention that has been demonstrated to accelerate learning.

Purpose of This Guide

This guide is designed to help LEAs think through elements of program design and make connections to other helpful resources. While this guide is not exhaustive, it outlines the foundational principles and key considerations that all LEAs should consider when implementing a high-impact tutoring program.

What is High-Impact Tutoring

High-impact tutoring (also referred to as high-dosage tutoring or tutoring to accelerate learning) is a form of teaching, one-on-one or in a small group, towards a specific goal. High-impact tutoring leads to substantial learning gains for students by supplementing (but not replacing) students' classroom experiences. High-impact tutoring is not remedial work. Rather, it is designed to respond to individual needs by complementing students' existing curriculum and focusing on scaffolding academic content, so students can access new learning while also building upon their knowledge and skills base (see Table 1).

High-impact tutoring programs¹ currently include the following characteristics:

- substantial time each week spent in required tutoring (in-person or virtually);
- sustained and strong relationships between students and their tutors;
- close monitoring of student knowledge and skills;
- alignment with school curriculum; and
- oversight of tutors to assure quality interactions.²

¹ High-dosage tutoring programs recognized as those that either have directly demonstrated significant gains in student learning through state-of-the-art research studies or have characteristics that have proven to accelerate student learning.

² Robinson, Carly D., and Susanna Loeb. (2021). High-Impact Tutoring: State of the Research and Priorities for Future Learning. (EdWorkingPaper: 21–384). Retrieved from Annenberg Institute at Brown University: <https://doi.org/10.26300/qf76-rj21>

Table 1. Overview of High-Impact Tutoring

High-Impact Tutoring Is	What High-Impact Tutoring Is Not
<p>Accessible to all</p> <p>For all students at a school</p>	<p>Remedial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For struggling students only ▪ Treated as a punishment
<p>Intensive and at least three times per week</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Up to 3:1 student-tutor ratio ▪ Occurs at least three times per week ▪ During the school day or immediately before/after school ▪ Treated like a scheduled class ▪ Sustained over the course of a school year 	<p>Low-dosage or inconsistent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Occurs weekly or infrequently ▪ Less than 30 minutes per session ▪ Before or after school ▪ Treated as an optional course offering ▪ Higher than a 3:1 student-tutor ▪ For a short period of time throughout the school year
<p>Provided by a qualified tutor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Has experience with the content ▪ Skilled at building strong relationship with students and student engagement 	<p>Provided by an unqualified tutor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Help from a peer ▪ A high-school volunteer ▪ An unvetted, untrained tutor
<p>Individualized</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Driven by data ▪ Aligned to student’s current skill levels while also connecting what is currently being taught in the classroom 	<p>Decontextualized</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sitting in front of a computer program ▪ Focused only on discrete skills ▪ Completing worksheets
<p>Responsive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A positive mentoring relationship ▪ Values students’ diverse strengths and needs ▪ Committed to high expectations for all students ▪ Provided in addition to core instruction and students’ other required services 	<p>A replacement to core instruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A substitute for other intensive interventions or individualized services a student may need ▪ In place of content area classroom instruction ▪ Cause for a student to miss core content area classes

Source: Ed Research for Recovery Design Principles³

³ Figure contents adapted from: Robinson, C.D., Kraft, M.A., Loeb, S., & Schueler, B.E. (2021). Accelerating Student Learning with High-Dosage Tutoring: Ed Research for Recovery Design Principles Series. Annenberg Institute at Brown University and University of Virginia.

[https://annenberg.brown.edu/sites/default/files/EdResearch for Recovery Design Principles 1.pdf](https://annenberg.brown.edu/sites/default/files/EdResearch%20for%20Recovery%20Design%20Principles%201.pdf).

What the Research Says

Rigorous research provides strong evidence that high-impact tutoring consistently leads to large improvements in learning outcomes for a wide range of students.⁴ High-impact tutoring is one of the most effective academic interventions, with evidence of greater impact than smaller class sizes, technology support, vacation or summer classes and longer school days or years.⁵

- A recent [meta-analysis of randomized evaluations of tutoring programs](#) concluded, on average, tutoring increased student achievement by an additional three to 15 months of learning across all grades and subjects, particularly early literacy, and high school math.⁵
- Tutoring consistently ranks among the [most effective evidence-based interventions](#) for students struggling in math and reading.⁶ A [review of almost 200 studies](#) found that high-dosage tutoring — delivered more than three days per week or at a rate of at least 50 hours over 36 weeks — is one of the few school-based interventions with demonstrated large, positive effects on both math and reading.⁷
- A [2017 study](#) examined interventions that aimed to improve the educational achievement for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds in elementary and middle school. Of all the interventions examined, feedback and progress monitoring and cooperative learning tutoring were the most common and the most effective.⁸

Tutoring to Accelerate Learning

While the research evidence shows that tutoring interventions can have positive impacts on student learning, past efforts to scale tutoring programs have not always been successful. However, there is strong evidence that high-impact tutoring can be scaled and still retain effectiveness.⁵ Researchers have identified that high-impact tutoring programs tend to include the following effective characteristics:⁴

- High-dosage (i.e., three or more sessions per week of required tutoring);
- A stated focus on cultivating tutor-student relationships;
- Use of formative assessments to monitor student learning;
- Alignment with the school curriculum; and
- Formalized tutor training and support.

⁴Robinson, Carly D., and Susanna Loeb. (2021). [High-Impact Tutoring: State of the Research and Priorities for Future Learning](#). Retrieved from Annenberg Institute at Brown University: <https://www.edworkingpapers.com/ai21-384>

⁵J-PAL Evidence Review. 2020. “The transformative potential of tutoring for PreK-12 learning outcomes: Lessons from randomized evaluations.” Cambridge, MA: Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab.

⁶Slavin, R. E. (2020). How evidence-based reform will transform research and practice in education. *Educational Psychologist*, 55 (1), 21–31. DOI: 10.1080/00461520.2019.1611432.

⁷Roland G. Fryer J. The Production of Human Capital in Developed Countries: Evidence from 196 Randomized Field Experiments. In: *Handbook of Field Experiments*. Vol. 2. Amsterdam: North-Holland; 2017. pp. 95–322.

⁸Dietrichson, J., Bog, M., Filges, T., & Klint Jorgensen, A.-M. (2017). [Academic Interventions for Elementary and Middle School Students With Low Socioeconomic Status: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis](#). *Review of Educational Research*, 87(2), 243–282.

Designing a Tutoring Program that Works

Design Elements of a High-Impact Tutoring Program

The following considerations are recommended when designing tutoring programs:⁹

Leverage well-trained, consistent tutors who build strong relationships with students:

- Research indicates that effective tutors can be from a variety of backgrounds.
 - Teachers, paraprofessionals, college students, and other types of tutors can be effective when tutoring one-to-one or in small groups.
 - Tutors should include certified special education teachers to assist with students receiving special education services to collaborate with other tutors and ensure the implementation of the students' individualized education program (IEP).
- Successful tutors are skilled at relationship building and are responsive to local context.
 - Tutoring programs that pair a student with a consistent tutor for the duration of the program may provide better learning environments.
 - Similar to positive teacher-student relationships, positive tutor-student relationships may lead to greater academic, social, and motivational outcomes.
- All tutors need initial training and ongoing coaching and accountability.

Utilize high-quality instructional materials aligned to standards, core classroom instruction, and grade level standards:

- The materials tutors use should be aligned with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS) at grade level.
- Tutors should focus on addressing gaps in the content and skills that are most critical to understanding the upcoming content.
- Tutors may also focus on building foundational skills while making connections to the content students are learning in class.

Focus on one-to-one or small group for individualized support:

- Tutoring does not need to be one-to-one, as tutors can effectively instruct up to three or four students at a time.
- Student grouping by skill level or language learner status may make for a more effective tutoring session.

Consider embedding tutoring in the school day or immediately before or after school to maximize student access:

- Embedding tutoring into the school day reduces barriers to attendance and facilitates a more academic-focused culture.
- Coordination between teachers and tutors allows for more consistency for students.

Schedule at least three sessions per week for sustained support, 30 minutes minimum:

- Tutoring is most likely to be effective when delivered in high doses.
- Duration of sessions depends on the content area and student age.

⁹ Bulleted contents adapted from: EdResearch for Recovery, The Annenberg Institute at Brown University

- Elementary students may benefit from shorter but more frequent sessions (i.e. 20 minutes, five times a week) and longer sessions for older students.
- The most effective tutoring programs last for at least 10 weeks, but many last for the entire school year.

High-impact tutoring is data-driven with tutors building and delivering sessions around student strengths and needs:

- Frequent assessment of learning provides timely feedback for each student and allows tutors to personalize instruction based on students’ individual needs.

See [Appendix A](#) for a full list of Design Principles for Effective Tutoring.

Key Principles for Implementing High-Impact Tutoring

Effective tutoring programs are those which are carefully designed and implemented. Given the intensive amount of time required for high-impact tutoring to increase outcomes for students, program goals, measures, schedules and instructional materials are its essential foundations. If program commitment is not evident in dedicated schedules, clear goals, appropriate assessments and high-quality materials, buy-in from staff and families may be inconsistent. Therefore, tutoring will likely be less effective without the intended effects.¹⁰

When implementing a high-impact tutoring program, LEAs should consider the following principles to guide reflection and discussion around effective tutoring practices and potential programming features:¹¹

Implement proven practices aligned to the [New Jersey Tiered System of Supports](#)¹²

- High-impact tutoring is a critical layer of support, not a replacement for High-Quality Tier I instruction.

Align tutoring with your LEA’s priorities and existing initiatives.

- All students can benefit from the individualized instruction found in high-impact tutoring.
- LEAs can build this tutoring into their long-term strategy by reassessing existing interventions and initiatives, then find ways to incorporate tutoring to boost their effectiveness.

Ground tutoring initiatives in LEA needs.

- To identify and address needs, LEAs should engage stakeholders including school administrators, teachers, students’ caregivers, and (above all) students themselves.

¹⁰ Robinson, Carly D., and Susanna Loeb. (2021). High-Impact Tutoring: State of the Research and Priorities for Future Learning. Retrieved from Annenberg Institute at Brown University: <https://doi.org/10.26300/qf76-rj21>

¹¹ National Student Support Accelerator. (2021). Toolkit for Tutoring Programs. Retrieved from National Student Support Accelerator: <https://doi.org/10.26300/5n7h-mh59>

¹² Tier 1 provides high-quality learning environments, evidence-based curricular and instructional practices, and a continuum of supports and interventions in general education classrooms, including bilingual classroom, delivered with fidelity by trained teachers with the support of other professionals. Retrieved from NJTSS One-Page Brief: <https://www.nj.gov/education/njtss/brief.pdf>

- LEAs should assess not only students' knowledge and skills, but also their social emotional wellbeing, so that they can design tutoring to support both.

Develop a scaffolded plan for continuously improving and scaling up your program.

- Begin by identifying any initial focus area and conduct a small-scale pilot program for a subset of schools or students.
- Next, gather data on the pilot's effectiveness. This assists in building stakeholder investment by demonstrating its impact, as well as providing data for the program's continuous improvement.
- Once you know the program works, you can scale it up to more students at more schools, reassessing effectiveness at each step.
- As you scale up tutoring to serve more students and support more content areas, be prepared to adapt your program model to suit these new contexts.

Set aside time and capacity for planning logistics, building stakeholder investment, and supporting school-level implementation.

- Implementing tutoring across an LEA requires strong project management, with frequent touchpoints to communicate and build investment with stakeholders.
- Prepare to dedicate significant time and staff capacity to support this effort.

Program Implementation

Developing and implementing a new high-impact tutoring program can be broken into four specific phases of work: laying the foundation, planning for effective operations, designing for impact within LEAs particular program context and implementing the program (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Four Phases of HIT Program Implementation



Source: National Student Support Accelerator¹³

The points below summarize each phase of program implementation¹⁴ and provide LEAs with resources to carry out such tasks.

Lay the Foundation

A successful high-impact tutoring program requires coordinated collaboration across departments and at different levels of the organization, from teachers and tutors, students, parents, and community members to leadership. Input and buy-in from each of these levels will make the program more sustainable.

When laying the foundation for a successful high-impact tutoring program, LEAs should engage in the following considerations:

- Assemble an inclusive task force for making initial design decisions about tutoring.
- Identify a Focus Area (content area + grade level) or Focus Areas for tutoring.
- Plan for alignment of tutoring with existing initiatives by determining how tutoring can both enhance core programming and present opportunities to replace less effective initiatives.
- Identify the number of students you plan to reach.
- Set the initial goals you hope to achieve by implementing tutoring.
- Select an implementation strategy by partnering with a provider, growing your own or using a hybrid approach.

¹³ National Student Support Accelerator. (2021). High Impact Tutoring: District Playbook. Retrieved from National Student Support Accelerator: <https://studentsupportaccelerator.com/district-playbook>

¹⁴ Bulleted contents adapted from: High Impact Tutoring: District Playbook

Plan for Effective Operations

Successful implementation of high-impact tutoring requires planning the process in detail ahead of time. Below are a few considerations to get tutoring up and running. Timelines and estimates are needed, though these will vary depending on the size of the LEA, the needs of the community, and the scope of the tutoring program.

When planning operations for a successful high-impact tutoring program, LEAs should consider the following:

- Develop a project plan with feasible timelines.
- Develop a budget and identified initial and sustainable funding sources.
- Assess which departments across the LEA should be involved in implementing tutoring.
- Develop a staffing plan, including (at minimum) a project manager.
- Identify and persuade key stakeholders to ensure tutoring will be prioritized in the long term; and
- Develop a plan for building stakeholder investment in your rationale for tutoring and incorporating stakeholders in the planning and decision-making process.

Partner with a Provider or Grow Your Own Tutoring Program

Once LEAs have completed initial planning, the next critical task is designing the tutoring program. LEAs may choose to partner with a tutoring provider and use the provider's program design, create and grow their own tutoring program or pursue a hybrid approach.

When designing a successful high-impact tutoring program, LEAs should consider the following:

- Determine whether to design an in-house high-impact quality tutoring program OR contract with a high-quality tutoring provider.
- Develop systems and processes for data collection, reflection, and continuous improvement.
- Develop a plan for regularly and clearly communicating with stakeholders.

Implement High-Impact Tutoring

When implementing a high-impact tutoring program, LEAs should consider the following:

- Develop guidelines for selecting school sites and specific individual students for tutoring.
- Implement school site logistics, including scheduling tutoring sessions in the master schedule.
- Plan regular communication with caregivers and students to ensure enrollment and attendance.

Planning and Implementation Resources

The [National Student Support Accelerator](#) from the Annenberg Institute at Brown University provides comprehensive resources for those interested in implementing [high-impact tutoring](#). They provide [opensource Accelerator tools](#) and resources to make structuring, implementing, and scaling high-quality, high-impact tutoring programs as straightforward as possible.

Table 2. Planning Tools and Examples when Designing HIT programs

Planning Phase	Example Tools ¹⁵
Lay the Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toolkit for Tutoring Programs • Tutoring Program Model Dimensions Planning Tool • Conducting a District Landscape Analysis • Conducting a Community Landscape Analysis • Logic Model Guidance and Template • Educator Guide: High-Impact Tutoring Advocacy
Plan for Effective Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tutoring Cost Calculator • High-Impact Tutoring: District Playbook
Design for Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment and Selection • Measures & Data Collection • Performance Measurement Plan • Training & Support • Actions and Practices Reflection Tool
Implement High-Impact Tutoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Implementation Tools • Stakeholder Engagement • Tool Appendix

For additional resources and tools, on designing and implementing effective high-impact tutoring programs, please visit the [National Student Support Accelerator website](#).

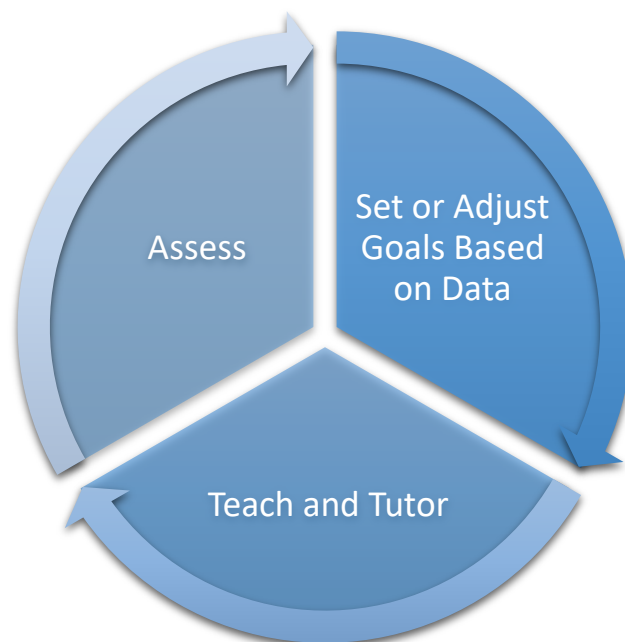
¹⁵Example tools — an extensive set of practical tools for practitioners and LEAs that want to develop or improve a high-dosage tutoring program. Retrieved from the National Student Support Accelerator: <https://studentsupportaccelerator.com/tools>

Establishing a Cycle of Continuous Improvement

High-impact tutoring accelerates student learning when LEAs commit to a cycle of continuous improvement both for students individually and for the tutoring program itself (see Figure 2). In this approach:

- Students' initial goals and overall program goals are set based on diagnostic data;
- Tutoring supplements academic instruction;
- Tutors collect formative assessment data to understand students' progress; and
- Tutors and teachers discuss both formative and benchmark data to determine new goals and/or adjust instruction.

Figure 2. Cycle of Continuous Improvement



Source: National Student Support Accelerator¹⁶

Tutoring programs, no matter how well established or well-studied, will sometimes fail to reach every high-impact tutoring standard. The best way to improve is to collect and analyze data, benchmark it against the standards for high-impact tutoring and other research and adjust. Gathering program leaders and other stakeholders in a community of practice powers the improvement process, as the discussion of best practices is tailored to specific, common challenges.

Together, the coalition of stakeholders interested in student success can raise the quality of high-impact tutoring to the point that it becomes an indispensable strategy, not only for pandemic recovery but an activity that is woven into the fabric of education for years to come.

¹⁶ National Student Support Accelerator. (2021). High Impact Tutoring: District Playbook. <https://studentsupportaccelerator.com/district-playbook>

Appendix

Appendix A Design Principles for Effective Tutoring¹⁷

Frequency

Tutoring is most likely to be effective when delivered in high doses through tutoring programs with three or more sessions per week or intensive, week-long, small group programs taught by talented teachers.

- The most effective tutoring interventions involve three or more sessions per week with sessions that last for about 30-60 minutes per day.
 - Elementary students may benefit from shorter but more frequent sessions (i.e. 20 minutes, five times a week).
 - Most effective tutoring programs last for at least 10 weeks, but many last for the entire school year.

Intensive “vacation academy” programs where small groups of struggling students focus on a single subject over week-long vacation breaks have also generated positive results.

- With roughly ten-to-one student-teacher ratios, vacation academy programs are more affordable than one-to-one tutoring models. Although they produce meaningful positive effects, the gains are smaller than those observed for high-impact tutoring.
- Vacation academies must be carefully designed to ensure impact. Successful programs have drawn on talented teachers who are likely better able to effectively serve small groups than inexperienced volunteers or even average-performing certified teachers. These programs also target students falling below proficiency thresholds but without significant attendance or behavioral issues.

Group Size

Tutors can effectively instruct up to three or four students at a time. However, moving beyond this number can quickly become small group instruction, which is less personalized and requires a higher degree of skill to do well. One-to-one tutoring is likely most effective but also more costly.

- Tutors can effectively instruct up to three or four students at a time.
- Tutoring does not need to be one-to-one.
- Grouping students by skill level or language learner status may make for a more effective tutoring session.

Personnel

Because the skills required for tutoring are different from the skills required for effective classroom teaching, a wide variety of tutors (including volunteers and college students) can successfully improve student outcomes. They must receive adequate training and ongoing support.

- Effective tutors can be from a variety of backgrounds. Teachers, paraprofessionals, college students, and other types of tutors can be effective when tutoring one-to-one or in small groups. It must be ensured that tutors:

¹⁷ Bulleted contents adapted from: Design Principles for Effective Tutoring at a Glance. The Annenberg Institute at Brown University

- Receive initial training, oversight, ongoing coaching, and clear lines of accountability.
- Become skilled at relationship building and knowledgeable about content.
- Are culturally competent and reflect the lived experiences of the students they serve.

Program Focus

Researchers have found tutoring to be effective at all grade levels—even for high school students who are severely behind. The evidence is strongest for reading-focused tutoring for students in early grades (particularly grades K-2) and for math-focused tutoring for older students.

- Reading-focused tutoring interventions for kindergarten and first graders have been evaluated far more often than other tutoring programs.
- Fewer studies evaluate tutoring initiatives in middle and high school. At these grade levels, there is greater evidence of success in math outcomes compared to reading outcomes.

Measurement

Tutoring programs that support data use and ongoing informal assessments allow tutors to tailor their instruction for individual students.

- Tutoring programs that effectively use data are more likely to be successful.
 - Many of the most successful tutoring interventions to date collected ongoing implementation data and used it to continuously improve their programs.
 - Successful tutoring programs often have clear learning objectives and effectively use data to assess the efficacy of their program.
- Frequent assessments¹⁸ of learning allow tutors to personalize instruction based on individual students' needs.
 - Formative assessments of learning provide the tutor with timely feedback on each student and allow for personalized instruction.

Relationships

Ensuring students have a consistent tutor over time may facilitate positive tutor-student relationships and a stronger understanding of students' learning needs.

- Tutoring programs that pair a student with a consistent tutor for the duration of the program may provide better learning environments.
 - Many tutoring interventions keep one tutor with a set student or group of students for the duration of the program.
 - Tutors that meet regularly with students can get to know individual students' strengths and weaknesses, while developing caring tutor-student relationships.
- Like positive teacher-student relationships, positive tutor-student relationships may lead to greater academic, social, and motivational outcomes.
 - Some successful tutoring interventions are relationship-driven programs that focus on building trusting relationships between tutors and students, in addition to enhancing academic achievement.
 - When students have positive, caring relationships with their tutors, they may become more motivated and have better attitudes toward school. Research on youth mentoring

¹⁸ Formative assessments may be conducted in the classroom or in a tutoring session.

programs suggests positive mentoring relationships can have a wide range of benefits for students' social-emotional well-being.

Curriculum

Using high-quality instructional materials that are aligned with the standards-based classroom content allows tutors to reinforce and support teachers' classroom instruction.

- Students are likely to learn more when their tutoring sessions complement and are responsive to their classroom grade-level instruction.
- Use high-quality, evidence based, culturally relevant instructional materials; aligned with grade-level standards and core instruction to address gaps in skills needed to access future content (rather than remediation).

Scheduling

Tutoring interventions that are conducted during the school day tend to result in greater learning gains than those that occur after school or during the summer.

- Design tutoring programs that take place during the school day to maximize student attendance and engagement.
- The NJDOE has released guidance on [Maximizing Schedules to Support Learning Acceleration](#). This resource provides information on the advantages of flexible scheduling, with the purpose of adding time for a learning acceleration block designed to meet students' needs.

Mode of Delivery

Most research has focused on in-person tutoring, but there is emerging evidence that tutoring can be effective when delivered at a distance.

- Virtual learning offers the potential to lower tutoring costs and potentially provide stronger matches between students' needs and tutors' skill sets by expanding the potential supply of tutors.

Prioritization

Programs that target lower-performing students can support those students who most need personalized instruction but can also create a negative stigma where tutoring is perceived as a punishment. Programs that target all students in a lower-performing grade level or school benefit from broader organizational commitment and the perception that tutoring is for everyone, but these programs are more costly.

- Decisions about which students to target are central; however, several different models have led to positive effects.
- Framing matters for avoiding negative stigma.

Appendix B: Text Version of Figure 1. Four Phases of Program Implementation

1. Lay the Foundation

Identify a focus area, determine your program's scale, set initial goals, and select an implementation strategy.

2. Plan for Effective Operations

Develop timelines, plan small-scale pilot programs, ensure staff capacity, determine budget and funding sources, and build key stakeholders' investments in tutoring.

3. Design for Impact: Partner with a Provider or Grow on Your Own?

Ensure program design aligns with the elements of High-Impact Tutoring and establish regular data collections, reflection, and continuous improvement strategies.

4. Implement High-Impact Tutoring

Identify school sites, select students, schedule tutoring sessions, and communicate regularly with students and caregivers to ensure enrollment and attendance.